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A Week at Forestdale;

BEING

A SUMMER IDYL,

THAT IS,

AN IDLE TALE, AS A MERE TRIFLE FOR AN IDLE DINNER WRIT,

BY

IDLE SINNER,

AT FORESTDALE, WHERE EACH TALE, HOWEVER STALE, WAS A SURE WINNER; NOW PRINTED, PRIVATELY, BY

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The Dramatis Personæ.

'Tis well to scan before the play.

First on the list, A Royal Queen :
A Lord and Lady *next are seen.*
Then comes A Hive of Little Bs,
And then An Orator, *to please ;*
And afterwards, A Donkey, *white*,
(The Orator to keep all right ;)
And then A Major from the Town :
A Country Major *next is shown.*
A Majoress *then claims attention*—
(Staff-officer to Major of first mention.)
Then next A Brace of Beams, *we'll say*,
(By lady owned, her name Miss J—
Which stands for Juno, by the way.)
The Voice of Brakesman, *very bold*,
A Round Red Moon, *now grown quite old :*
Also Disturbers of the Night,
And Haunted Church, *each, dreadful sight.*
Next comes The Deil, *the Major's friend*—
(He from the town, you understand ;)
A lot of Witches, *too, appear*,

And Brimstone, *making great uproar,*
To celebrate The Glorious Day
(From which all Christians flee away.)
Of Fairies, Elves, *and* "Ginger Pop,"
And other Spirits *quite a crop.*

The Scene—at Forestdale is laid,
Up in Vermont, in mountain shade.

The Time—"the heated term" it was,
When happened these things, marvellous,
In country all around :—

> The trees are brown, the grass is red,
> The birds no longer fly,
> For when they do their wings are scorched,
> And down they fall and die ;

Which folks have sworn, 'till all was blue,
Is every word quite gospel true,
As surely true they sound.

A Prologue ought to have been writ,
To say,—Aye, stranger! stop a bit;
At least it should have hinted :—
These idle rhymes, for *public* ear,
Are not now meant ; and now, to hear,
All privileges are stinted,—
Except to those whose ear and eye
Received them first, all laughingly,
(But never, never critically)
And for whom now, mysteriously,
And *privately*, they're printed.

A WEEK AT FORESTDALE.

Canto the First.

In the fairest street of New York town, one hundred eighty-two,
Lives a kindly man, a gentleman, an honest man and true;
He's something turned of thirty, and he's handsome, gay, and bold,
And his name——(well, go ask it, and surely you'll be told.)

Now this kindly man, this gentle-man, goes out of town sometimes,
And when he goes he thinks about some other people's lives;
"See here," says he, "just come along, you'r looking mighty pale,
The city don't agree with you, we'll go to Forestdale."

Now Forestdale is in Vermont, among the mountains green,
And search the earth from pole to pole its like can ne'er be seen;
The mountain breezes, fresh and fair, come roaring through the trees,
The mountain streams, all musical, are——(anything you please.)

The mountain pines, with perfumed breath, are sighing in the wind,
And the hemlocks keep them company, through ages out of mind;
The mountain trout are in the streams, the deer are on the hills,
The birds are singing all around, "God save you from all ills."

Canto the Second.

'Twas thus of Forestdale I sang,
And of its noble lord;
(For he has lordly acres,
As well as lordly word),

And singing thus I hurried
From this heat-oppressèd place,
And singing thus I started
On a Hudson river race.

I mean in cars, as they are called,
That go upon a rail,
Beside the Hudson river
Where a commodore doth sail.

And, in safety from all danger,
On his jaunty little yacht,
Doth watch the trains all rushing
To the devil—or what not.

And while they rush the price of "stocks"
Is going up and down,
And the commodore he chuckles
As he says to Briggs & Brown:—

"We'll make our 'pile' you see, my boys,
We'll have a little sport,
Knock up some cars, knock down the stocks,
And all of us sell 'short.'"

But ours was not the train for him,
He'd had his little fun;
We passed beyond his eagle eye,
And so the race was won.

Canto the Third.

"The moon was shining silver bright,
The stars with glory crowned the night,"
When, rattling on upon the train,
The brakesman shrieked with might and main—
And with a voice that seemed to be
A warning from eternity,
Or bray of donkey in a fright,
The screech of owlet in the night,
The screaming of ring-tailed raccoon,
The doleful notes of cracked bassoon—
"Brandon, Brandon, be lively there;
Aboard!"—the train moved off, and *there* we were.

"The moon was shining silver bright,
The stars with glory crowned the night,"
When, rolling on upon the sand,
'Mid dust and shadowy trees so grand,
Behind a span of splendid steeds,
Such as Green Mountain only breeds,
Blodgett cried out, "You see that light?"
I saw it, yes, all sparkling bright,
And peeping out among the trees,
Suggested *home* and quiet ease.

A moment more and we are there;
A moment more, two ladies fair,
With flickering tapers, raised on high,
With smiling face and beaming eye,
Came out beneath the sheltering green,
(A fairy sight as e'er was seen),
To give us greetings to their home,
(Dear, lovely home), "Welcome, welcome."

One was the mistress of this forest home;
And sure no dame of song, of feudal race
Ancient and lordly, generations come,
In Hall barronial bred, did e'er grace,
And, over entertainment gay, leave trace
Of such sweet gentleness, such winning way,
Such kindly smile, which, nestling on the face,
As moonlight o'er the shadowy glade doth play,
Sheds glow of happiness where'er her graceful step doth stay.

Canto the Fourth.

Another day brought other folks,
Uncles, cousins, and all that;
They came all merry and full of jokes,
Giving as good as they got.
But the B——ams, good Lord!
I pledge you my word
Such people never were seen;
They came in the night
And gave us a fright:
Disturbed our sweet slumbers had been
Not an hour before,
By the awfulest roar,
That was ever set going. Good zounds!
They took cannon and bells,
Which at midnight sent yells
Discordant beyond any bounds,
To keep sleep from our eyes
'Till the B——ams arise,
And creep stealthily into the grounds.
But no, no, Mrs. B.,
Oh no, loveliest B.,
Oh no, no, I foresee
I make a most terrible row,
Mrs. B. came in time,
(That's good for my rhyme),
Mr. B. came lingering—how?

Then came the Fourth, that glorious time
For the grave and gay,
When people burn powder and talk sublime,—
About the great day.

Canto the Fifth.

The Day it was hot,
The question was what
Should we ever do for the day?
Says Nell on the spot,
"No matter for hot
On the '*Fourth*,' why sure, we will play."

The Day, 'twas so hot,
There wasn't a spot
At all fit, I said, for the play;
But Miss Josie said,
"Now, dull stupid head,
Why, it's just the time for croquet."

Now this little speech
(My ear quick to reach)
Delighted me much, you must know;
For the lady herself
Is sprightly as elf,
And, in carriage, another Juno.

So after Josie I went,
On pleasure full bent;
I cold (I an iceberg, you know),
Never caring a pin,
If I could but win
A brace of bright beams from said Joe.

But, couldn't do *that*,
And that was as pat
As the fact that this was the day
For patriots all,
Big, little, and small,
To glorify once and alway.

Then dishearten'd quite,
A pipe, in despite,
I took, and went on on my way;
And, sauntering around,
In a little while found,
Consolation, and thus did I say:—

"Now this is the place
To come to for grace,
In the patriot line, and so forth;"
But as I began,
Both William and Dan
(Being patriots, both, of great worth)

Came in for a draft,
Which was instantly quaffed
"To the folks, big, little, and small,
Who, at sweet Forestdale,
Live hearty and hale,
As God meant them to live—growing tall."

Then, looking around,
I saw Josie bound
Up and down in a tropical net;

So over I went,
Past the hospital tent,
To see if the beams were there yet.

But no!—all was sun,
As hot as a bun,—
That is, as hot as—ah well!
We'll not mention the name,
For it rhymes with the same
As the place where old Lucifer fell.

But what of the day?
After all, did we play?
Ay, bless you, what rollicking time!
Will. got a big gun
And some crackers; the sun
Never once interrupting the rhyme
They did make and did keep,
Giving us all a fair peep
At Inferno and blazes you'd say;
For Carroll had punk,
And Pussie had spunk;
And then Mrs. —— (the aunt by the way),
Went roaming around
Like a Queen, lately found,
And "ruling the roast" all the day,
While Mrs. H——ing,
The ever charming,
Sometimes grave, though oftener gay,
All the men, even Dan,
E'en myself, harmless man,
Were nowhere (except in her way).

Then, the sun going down,
We turned to the crown
    Of a hill that was lying hard by,
And there on the ground,
From the country around,
    Stood the patriots, grouped on the sly.

Then a Major came up
From Brandon, to sup,
    And have a good time on the day ;
And when it grew dark,
As spry as a lark
    He went to the hill o'er the way.

And he set it ablaze,
To the patriots' amaze,
    And wreathed it in fiery smoke
From all sorts of things,
Such as rockets and rings,
    That the Major with match soon awoke

And then such a fiz,
And banging and whiz
    As the Major kept up, to be sure ;
Blue lights and red,
As big as your head,
    And whirligig-wheels by the score.

An Orator came,
(A speech very lame
    He managed to make, by the way)
Who said of the Fourth,

" God gave it a birth
That is worthy the palmiest day
Which ever was known
Since the Babel key-stone,
Did something (the Lord only can say),

" To bother us all,
Big, little, and small,
And send us all roaming around,
As bewildered as seals,
And happy as eels,
Or squirrels that go in the ground."

We drank to the Fourth,—
" If told at its worth,
Would live the longest of all
Days little or big."
(Says the Orator trig,
Looking sweet as a fig),
" Let's put on a wig
And be ' big-wigs' in Forestdale hall.

" For nothing's so grand
As think well of the hand
You have in your country's affairs;
The country is large,
Each man is a barge-
Load of ' moral ideas'—unawares."

Canto the Sixth.

The Fourth it was done,
The week was begun,
And it ran along 'till it closed;
And never a day
Passed wholly away
Without being newly disposed.

One evening we sat
Round the tables to chat,
When occurred a most singular sight—
The Major rushed in,
Not caring a pin,
But clearly was in a great fright.

Says the Major, "Look here,
It seems very queer
The moon should behave in this way;
By Jove it's ablaze,
Or I'm in a haze,
And don't know what's what, as they say."

The Major looked pale,
(He'd been drinking no ale,
That's true, to make him look red)
But he ran in and out,
And all round about
Like a bear with a very sore head.

Now the Major's a man,
(His t'other name's Dan),
That never playeth a trick;
So we all stood aghast
'Till a thundering blast
Came from Blodgett, "Come quick."

Now Blodgett's Dan's son,
(So the story doth run),
And you'd believe it, too, if you saw
The two there that night
In a most sorry plight,
Like plaintiffs just quit of the law.

But no matter for that,
If we're to get at
The tale of The Round Red Moon,
Which the Major declared,
Flashed, flickered, and flared
Like a beacon fire lit up in June.

So off we all ran
(This Forestdale clan),
Thinking the very old Harry's to pay,
When two—each a man—
(That's William and Dan)
Behave in so fearful a way.

And reaching the green,
(That is what had been),
What a sight did we see, to be sure,

The moon was as red
As a turkey cock's head,
Or the lips of a big blackamoor.

The grass was red too,
The hill, that was blue
The other week through,
Was gleaming, also,
Like some great volcano in ire:
The bark on the trees
Was all in a blaze;
The great fleeting haze
Struck us dumb with amaze,
For it seemed like a curtain of fire—

All tumbling down
To light on the crown
Of our hatless and bonnetless heads.
To burn us all up
As clean as a top
And leave not a grease spot besides.

So all in a fright
We set off in despite
Of our great leader and ran.
And never on earth
Did people of worth
E'er follow a leader like Dan.

Our speed was so great,
Before we could halt
A church opened out of the wood.

And behind it the ground,
With red tombstones around,
Brought us up all standing; we stood

Shrieking loud, very loud,
For never, I'm vowed,
Did such sight before ever hail
From heaven or earth,
Or ever have birth,
Except at this same Forestdale.

But why do I essay such lofty flight?
My muse stands speechless in so great a sight;
Such scene would tax the genius of Burns,
And to that ghostly counsellor it turns.
Instinctively it turns, as moon to sun,
To borrow light which never could be won,
Nor honestly acquired by honest ways:
Though Pistol says, "Base is the slave who pays."

Near by, a stream poured down its floods,
Silence profound reigned in the woods;
The red fires gleamed from pole to pole,
Near and more near they seem to roll,—
When glimmering through the forest trees,
The little church seem'd all ablaze;
Through every crack the beams were glancing,
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Warlocks and witches there were plenty,
With hoods of owls and dresses scanty;
With horns as long as steepled church,

With knees all knotted like the birch:
Their hair about their horns entwined.
Spread out like comet's tails behind.

And 'mongst them all, on pulpit throne.
There sat Old Nick, his flesh all bone.
A cooling there his ill-shaped body.
Rattling his bones to make them jolly.
His was the task to music make,
And this the method he did take;
And seated on the pulpit book,
'Till roof and rafter fairly shook.
He kept the music up apace,
While round and round the warlocks dance.
Each holding in his hand a light,
Each bent on fiendish antic sleight.

Inspiring, brave, bold Major Dan.
What dangers thou canst make us scan!
With thee to lead we fear no trick.
With "ginger pop" we 'd face e'en Nick.
So off we rushed to seek the Queen,
And crave her pardon for the sin
Of using once her precious name,
To turn a jest however tame.

All in a trice the lights went out.
The church grew dark, the witches' shout
No longer rang through forest glade,
And all was silence in the shade.
When warlock cries ceased 'neath the roof.
And Nick his heels had cooled enough.

The rattling stream once more rang clear
Its pleasant sound to human ear;
And now there's nothing more to fear.
The Round Red Moon again has paled,
The flaming curtain off has sailed,
No longer red the grass in hue,
The mountain top again is blue,
And to the sky it seems to say,
Like love-sick maiden in the play,
"Come now, I'll meet thee half the way."

So now we laughed and turned away,
All wondering what there was to pay,
And strided up to where we came,
To seek our seats at forest home,
Which Major Dan had made us quit
To make such sorry night of it.

The "ginger pop" we did not need,
So Major Dan took up the lead;
And off we started, one and all,
Merry as maskers from a ball;
Content to give the Queen her way,
And never have a word to say
About the jest 'till other day—
Well knowing that her queenly heart
Is but a very tender part
Of her great self, so good, so fair,
So everything that one could e'er
Dream that his precious Queen should be,
Upon the land or on the sea.

Ah! queen of hearts,—but here I stop,
Long, long may wave thy "ginger pop."

Now thinking thus about the Queen,
As I have said, and you have seen,
And thinking too that in the play
They have a song, which is to say,
That he who fights and runs away,
May live to fight another day,
We lost no further time I vow,
And off we started, easy now.

But some one says, with wisdom too,
That men and mice may ofttimes do
What they desire for pleasure's sake;
But that, alas! 'tis great mistake
To think Dame Fortune does not take
Revenge sometimes, and mischief make;
For "pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snowflake in the river,
One moment white, then melt forever;
Or like the Borealis race
That flits e'er you can point the place."

So now it was—the Deil had seen
The Major in the night's red sheen;
And silvering o'er The Round Red Moon,
He douced the glim and stopped the tune;
And from the church he flew around,
His rattling bones, most awful sound,

Echoed throughout the forest wide,
Like harsh rough stones, put up on slide,
And, while descending, shaken well,
For managers' sensation sell,
When they would play at noises loud,
Upon the stage to please a crowd,
And imitate the thunder's roar,
While fearful lightnings round them pour.

The Major caught a glimpse of Nick,
His bunch of bones, all cool and slick,
And having learned the fellow's slight,
Tipped him a wink and took to flight.

The Major knew full well his pace,
The Deil was distanced in the race.

The Deil paused at the wicker gate,
And thus the Major did berate:—
"O Dan! O Dan! thou 'lt get thy fairing,
Thou 'lt ne'er get cool while I am spering;
The Round Red Moon will last the weak;
Across the hills thou 'lt solace seek.
And scorched and sweltered thou shalt be,
And, in that drive's eternity,
Thou 'lt wish many a time, like me,
To strip the flesh from off thy bones,
And cool thyself upon the stones."

The Deil skipped to the public road,
And off he bounded to the wood;
The Major shook his fist and swore,

While thus the Majoress did outpour:—
"O Dan! O Dan! what do you mean,
Bringing disgrace upon your name,
With bony friend like that to claim?
Go hide yourself, for very shame."

Now say we of the Majoress,—
More truly beautiful she is
Than any fabled-story Princess.
You'd smile to see a lock of gray,
On her fair head, peep out to say,
"Old, think you? That will never be!"
But years enough she had to know
The Major's ways,—he her's, I vow.

Off shot the Major, smart as elf,
And 'twixt the sheets did hide himself.

Canto the Seventh.

The week sped on,
The hours went and came;
The week sped on,
The days, alas! the same.

The week sped on,
We drove through shady nooks;
The week sped on,
We fished the mountain brooks:—

That is, the country Major, took a lot of us to see
How they take the trout upon the hook in that wild country;
And now, while I am thinking, let me say it, once for all,
That a nobler, braver soldier never faced the cannon ball;
And a finer hearted fellow, never friend in need hath stood,
And never cooked such *hundred trout* 'neath thunderbolt and flood.

But the *big fish* wouldn't nibble, and they'd no mind to bite,
'Till the city Major joined us, looking round to left and right;
"Come boys," says he, "come help me, come help me if you please,—
I want some mice, quite juvenile, and some white-faced bumblebees;
With these we'll catch, I wager you, the biggest trout this year;"—
Says the country Major, "Daniel, are we tom-cats, Major dear?"

But, nothing daunted by this sneer, he roamed about the brooks,
And he found the bait he wanted, and in he cast his hooks;
And O! such sight, among big fish, was never seen before,
They came from every quarter, by the dozen and the score;

Some darted at the little mice, some at the bumblebee,
And on, and on, the Major fished, as long as he could see;
And when he stopped the fish were strewn for miles and miles around;
We gathered them in wagon loads,—full fifty thousand pound.

The week sped on,
We fished the lake;
The week sped on,
A *fête champêtre.*

The week sped on,
To horse!—a run;
The week sped on,
The "buck-board"—done.

Yes, done! O, Forestdale! O, Forestdale!
The end is near, the end is near;
Feign would I stay and sing a tale
That e'en the little birds would hear:—
A tale, a song of earthly bliss,
A song, divine, of happiness.

I stand beneath thy noble shades,
The sun is sinking in the west;
Softly the light plays o'er the glades,
Brightly it gleams on mountain crest:—
A crown of glory resting there,
A crown of splendor past compare.

And far away in blue doth lie
Great waves, high rolling there, as when
You see them 'gainst the evening sky,
Heaved up by storm upon the main:—
The Adirondacks, mighty child
Of Earth's convulsions, fierce and wild.

While here embower'd, and girdled round
By forests vast, that moan aloud
When tempest roars, is spot of ground,
Fresh as a sunbeam through the cloud ;
And on it stands, through years long gone,
The granite home that's called "the Hall,"
Deep buried in the trees, alone,
And shadowed by the mountain wall :—
A "dove cot" some one said in play,
An eyre we might rather say.

Yet not *alone*, for there I see
Another nest,—aye, hive of bee ;
For from it comes, with gladsome grace,
Of Bs a swarm, of queens a brace.
Here tripping light comes Nina gay,
Who's speaking eyes have much to say
If tongue *is* quiet all the day :
And Katie, fresh as any breeze,
And Twins, as like as any peas,
And all as happy as you please,—
The prettiest of all pretty Bs.
Now here they come to meet Miss Nell,
Another B, I see full well ;
Nor dove, nor eaglet, I declare,—
Aye, surely, maiden, fresh and fair,
Is this Nell B. with golden hair ;
And golden heart she has beside,
And graceful figure for a ride
On Lady Gay, the "mountain bride ;"
And Will., her brother, on his bay,
Makes valiant escort, truth to say,

For well doth ride this Willie B;
A fearless fellow, too, and bold
On horse he is, when all is told.
But Carroll likes the donkey white,
Which beast is trained, in all despite,
To stop when least expected quite.
Now mounted on this ancient steed,
Bold Carroll rides and rides indeed,
'Till donkey bobs his grizzly head,
And off goes hero in the mud;
And Pussie laughs and follows up,
As full of tricks as juggler's cup,
And rides, and rides, and rides away,
More fearless than you'd ever see
Another girl of eight to be;
And now of Pussie, what is more,
Her like was never seen before,
And never will again, I'm sure.
And thus we'll end this B. B. song,
Thus end this Canto, dreadful long.

Canto the Eighth.

The word must be spoken, the parting must come,
The horses are harnessed, the carriages wait;
One and all we must leave this Forestdale home,
And go our own ways—we must n't be late—
For the train will not linger,
The moment not slumber,
The word must be spoken—Farewell.

Farewell to our host, farewell to our hostess,
Farewell to you all companions most dear;
To these Forestdale shades and Forestdale pleasures,
Farewell to you all!—(forever I fear);
Oh! no, not forever,
No not thus to sever
Forever, forever, but still 'tis—Farewell.

We've parted full oft from the loved and the loving,
The word I have uttered has lingered full oft
On lips that would crave as a blessing, a blessing,
Nevermore to have said it, be it never so soft—
The word that I've uttered,
Though scarcely have muttered,
That word of such meaning—Farewell.

Ah! once it was easier, much easier than now,
But *now* never said without pain;
It meaneth a blessing, but we know full well how
Our hopes are not meeted, I ween.
And so we would linger,
The moment pray slumber,
And not *force* us to say it—Farewell.

But the horses are harnessed, we've warning to go;
So here now, your hands, one and all!
The children, God bless them! their tutor also,
When we've turned from sweet Forestdale hall.
The word it is spoken!
The link it is broken!
Alas! for a token,—
Yes! yes! here I have it!—*Fare-well!*

For that word, rightly spoken,
Is *itself* a bright token—
Heart to heart a bright token,
Nevermore to be broken—Fare-well!

Canto the Last.

Once more upon the train we go,
Our backs to Forestdale, also
Our faces to New York;
The dust is flying everywhere,
The sun is in a tropic stare,
And this is sorry work.

At Rutland town we part again,
"Aboard, aboard," with might and main,
Shrieks out the brakesman bold;
And on we rush upon our way,
Too sad for any sort of day,
(Unless 'twas very cold.)

For we are in the melting mood,
As on we rush through field and wood,
The cinders flying round;
The dust and smoke and ashes hot,
A sunstroke bred in every spot
Of the heat o'erburdened ground.

But on we rush through thin and thick,
Past Adirondacks (mighty sick
By this time growing now);

And on we go beyond Champlain,
On whose bright waters, years, amain,
MacDonough, in a row,

Did spill the British in the lake,
And from them he did boldly take
A schooner and a scow;
And something more I think it was,
But little cared we, not a cuss,
For history, just now.

Two hours past noon, exhausted quite,
We sought and found in all despite
Of heat and dust and sun,
What Mrs. B. did see full well
Would save the life and save the soul
Of travellers more than one.

Cold tea in jugs of jolly weight,
Cold bourbon not forgotten quite,
Cold turkey, Lord, how fine!
And pickles, ham, and crackers rare,
And cheese from Cheshire, I declare,
And cake and claret wine.

And with this consolation now,
We got resigned, not caring how
The dust and sun behaved;
And down we rushed through burning Troy,
And down the Hudson 'till, ahoy!
The smells came on the wind.

And then we knew that we were home,
A happy week had come and gone,
    And in the town by rail,
We'd come to sigh and say, alas!
Life's come, I swear, to a pretty pass,
    Without a Forestdale.

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